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INFANTILE DIARRHOEA

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Diarrhoea is a term used to designate frequent loose movements of the bowels. It is one of the commonest and most troublesome of the disorders of infancy, and is the cause of more deaths than any other disease. It is most common in hot weather, particularly July and August, and is exceedingly common in bottle-fed babies at this time, as a result of changes produced in the milk by the germs, the growth of which is favored by the high temperature. It is more common and also more fatal among poor children, whose surroundings are unhygienic and where there is filth, overcrowding and lack of fresh air. The poorly developed and diseased child suffers more than the healthy one. The period of dentition is a particularly hard time.

Causes. The greatest cause of diarrhoea is the use of improper or impure food. Spoilt milk is the most common of these. There are two kinds of diarrhoea, the simple and the infectious.

The simple diarrhoea is caused in many ways, such as the entrance of an indigestible article (food or otherwise), into the intestines, thus causing irritation. Green and spoilt fruits are common examples. A laxative drug given a child will often start diarrhoea. A child may have diarrhoea from a fright, overheating, chilling, etc. Then again we have the diarrhoea of uremia.

The simple diarrhoea is the mildest form of the ailment, and usually yields readily to proper treatment. It generally begins with some evidence of colic, the child cries and draws up its legs as if in pain, within a short time there is a diarrhoea. There may be six or seven movements a day. At first they are yellow, then turn greenish and slimy with white curds. The child is restless and fretty and has a temperature of 102° or more, which soon falls to normal. If it lasts more than a few hours, the limbs become flabby. Simple diarrhoea is often self-terminated, that is, the irritating substance will be evacuated by the diarrhoea. Then again castor oil (where there is no vomiting), is given, which clears the intestinal tract and the diarrhoea ceases. If the cause of the simple diarrhoea is not removed it can run on into the more severe type, particularly in the summer time.

The infectious diarrhoea is a very difficult problem, and has many divisions and subdivisions, being caused by many different organisms. The most common organisms are the Shiga and Flexner germs which cause the bacillary dysentery. The strepto-coccus is rare. Other or-

ganisms produce similar symptoms, but can not be differentiated without a microscopic examination of the stool.

The infectious diarrhoea caused by the Shiga or Flexner organisms, begins with from twenty to thirty or more movements occurring in twenty-four hours. These stools are large, watery, usually green, containing small fine curds, pus, blood, and a considerable amount of mucus. There is tenesmus which will often produce prolapsed rectum. Vomiting is present. The temperature reaches 105° or higher accompanied with great prostration, weak pulse, and often cyanosis. The loss of body fluid is shown by the depressed fontanelle, dry skin, sunken eyes, etc. The prognosis is grave, as very few babes can recover.

Treatment. We can not act too quickly in these cases. They are usually given castor oil and all food is withheld. Sterile water is given, the amount to be the same as the amount of food the babe takes when well. This is very important, and if the child will not take it, it must be given subcutaneously. It cannot be given by rectum, because of the irritation there. Normal saline is used. It has been proved that in these cases of diarrhoea, after catharsis and starvation, the babes do well if given lactose 5 per cent, which supplies some nourishment and also antagonizes the bacteria.

Colon irrigation is used to great advantage, as cleanliness is important. This can be given once or twice daily, depending entirely upon the reaction. If there is collapse it ought not to be used. Convalescing is extremely hard. Milk should be withheld for a long time, the diet beginning with barley water, and making a *very gradual* return to the normal.

The diarrhoea caused by the strepto-coccus bacillus is severe. The babes do not respond to treatment and usually die within a few hours.

The diarrhoea caused by the gas bacilli is not severe, the babe rarely dies. These cases have been successfully treated by buttermilk.

THE CARE OF THE BREASTS AND HOW TO INCREASE BREAST MILK

BY MARTHA W. MOORE, R.N.

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A query in the February JOURNAL, sent by a Kansas nurse, "How can breast milk be increased?" suggested this topic, and could be answered by itself; but there is so much to be said on the care of the breasts, leading up to this question, which is helpful to the nurse, that the subjects can be considered together. I have often thought that either or both of these subjects would be excellent material for a doctor's lecture